

## COMMITTEE REPORT

BY THE DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC GROWTH AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES  
READING BOROUGH COUNCIL  
PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE: 8<sup>th</sup> September 2021

Ward: Abbey

Application No.: 201650/FUL

Address: 111A Watlington Street

Proposal: Part demolition of existing industrial building and erection of a three-storey end of terrace building of 6 flats (C3 use) (amended description)

Date valid: 30<sup>th</sup> November 2020

Target Decision Date: 25<sup>th</sup> January 2021

### RECOMMENDATION

Delegate to the Head of Planning, Development and Regulatory Services (HPDRS) to i) **GRANT** full planning permission, subject to the satisfactory completion of a s106 legal agreement or ii) Refuse full planning permission if the legal agreement is not completed by 31<sup>st</sup> October 2021 (unless officers on behalf of the Head of Planning, Development and Regulatory Services agree to a later date for completion of the legal agreement)

The legal agreement is to include the following heads of terms:

1. Policy Compliant Affordable Housing Contribution (amount to be confirmed prior to committee meeting)
2. Provision and implementation of a refuse disposal management plan for collection of waste by private contractor

Conditions:

1. Time limit - standard three years for implementation
2. In accordance with the approved Plans
3. Pre-commencement submission and approval of materials and scheme for retention re-use of southern flank wall of existing building
4. Pre-commencement submission and approval of cycle parking details
5. Pre-commencement submission and approval of Construction Management Plan (including measures for control of noise and dust)
6. Pre-commencement submission and approval - Contaminated Land 1: site characterisation report
7. Contaminated Land 2: remediation scheme
8. Contaminated Land 3: implementation of remediation scheme
9. Contaminated Land 4: reporting any unexpected contamination
10. Pre-commencement submission and approval of a noise assessment and mitigation scheme
11. Pre-commencement submission and approval of a habitat enhancement scheme
12. Pre-commencement submission and approval of details of hard and soft landscaping
13. Pre-commencement submission and approval of a design stage SAP assessment
14. Pre-occupation submission and approval of an as built SAP assessment
15. Pre-occupation implementation of hit and miss panelling to first and second floor rear windows
16. Pre-occupation provision of bin store details (pest control)
17. Pre-occupation notification of addresses - no access to parking permits
18. No access to parking permits

19. Control of construction hours (0800-1800 Mon-Fri, 0900-1300 Sat & not on Sundays or Bank Holidays)
20. No burning of waste on site
21. No fixing or installing of miscellaneous item to the external faces or roof of any building without the prior approval from the LPA
22. Pre-occupation provision of obscure glazing and hit and miss panel screening to windows

Informatives:

1. Positive and proactive requirement
2. S.106 applies
3. CIL
4. Terms and conditions
5. Pre-commencement conditions as seen and agreed by the applicant
6. Works affecting the Highway
7. Fee for conditions discharge
8. Building Regulations - noise between residential units
9. No entitlement to parking permits

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The site contains a vacant part brick part timber clad two storey light Victorian era industrial building which is attached to an end of terrace property located on the east side of Watlington Street. Records indicate that historically the building was occupied as a builder's merchants (from mid-1800's to early 1900's). The most recent known use of the building to Officers is as a glass merchants in the 1970's.
- 1.2 The site is located within the Eldon Square Conservation Area and adjacent to the south of the building is a Grade II listed building (71-73 Queens Road). The application building, as per the majority of buildings within this conservation area, is also a building of townscape merit as designated by the Eldon Square Conservation Area Appraisal (2007). Buildings identified as having "townscape merit" vary in appearance, but commonly they will be good examples of relatively unaltered 19th century buildings where their style, detailing and building materials provides the streetscape with interest and variety. Most importantly, they make a positive contribution to the special interest of a conservation area.

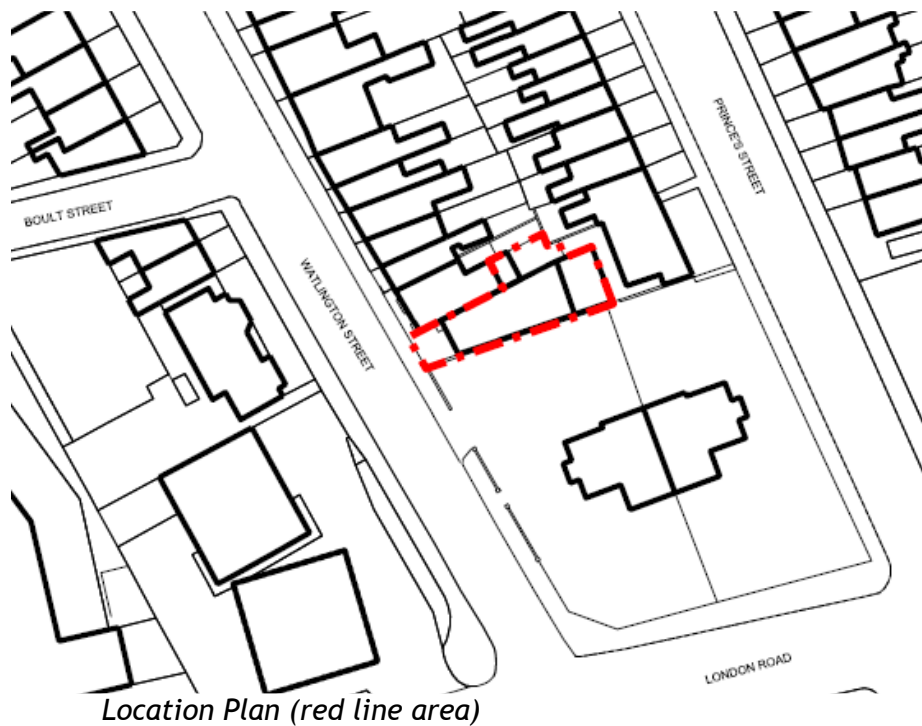


*Photograph of existing building viewed from Watlington Street*



*Photograph of existing building viewed from rear from adjacent car park*

- 1.3 Watlington Street is a predominantly residential road containing terraced properties. The majority are two storeys with basements however, there are also a number of three storey dwellings within the terraces. There are also retail units to the ground floor of some of the properties, two churches within the road as well as a petrol station. The adjacent Grade II listed building at no. 71-73 Queens Road is an NHS/healthcare building. The site is also located within an air quality management area.



## 2. PLANNING HISTORY

- 2.1 07-01073-FUL - Change of use of ground floor from retail unit (A1 use) to a two-bedroom residential flat incorporating alterations and refurbishment, and alterations to existing first floor flat to provide additional bedroom. 111a Watlington Street: change of use from an office and commercial unit (B1 use) to one two-bedroom and two one-bed room residential flats, incorporating demolition of lean-to part on east elevation to create an amenity area, and alterations and refurbishment of existing building - Granted.

## 3. PROPOSALS

- 3.1 The application seeks full planning permission for the part demolition of the existing part timber part brick industrial building and erection of a three-storey end of terrace building of 6 flats (C3 use).
- 3.2 The proposed replacement building would be finished in red brick at ground and first floor level whilst the second floor of accommodation would be finished in slate panels. Doors would be timber whilst windows would be grey aluminium. A basement level of accommodation is also proposed which would create two x 2-bedroom duplex flats across ground and basement floor level served by front and rear lightwells. Four x 1-bedroom flats are proposed at first and second floor level. The first and second floor unit's location to the front of the building would be served by enclosed balcony areas.
- 3.3 The duplex unit to the front of the building would be accessed via a ground floor level door from Watlington Street whilst the other units would be accessed from an existing entrance gate to the rear of the southern elevation of the building accessed via an existing pathway along the northern boundary of the adjacent car parking serving no. 71-73 London Street. Cycle and bin storage would be located within a small courtyard area to the rear of the building.

3.4 Amended plans have been submitted during the course of the application which make the following changes to the development:

- Retention of southern boundary wall (that to the boundary with Melrose House no. 71-73 London Road)
- Part retention of the southern flank wall of the existing building which would be incorporated within the new development
- Amended roof form to the new building with a pitched rather than flat roof now proposed to the Watlington Street frontage to reflect the pitch of the rest of the existing terrace
- Reduced window proportions to front and side elevations
- Removal of rear balconies
- Removal of ground floor level side facing windows to the south flank elevation



*Proposed visual of development viewed from Watlington Street*





*Proposed visual of development viewed from rear from adjacent car park/Prince's Street*

- 3.5 The Applicant sought detailed pre-application advice from Officer's including advice from the Local Planning Authority's Design Review Panel prior to submission of the application.
- 3.6 The application has been called to PAC by Councillor Page given the sensitive nature of the site and its location within the Eldon Square Conservation Area.

#### 4. CONSULTATIONS

##### **RBC Environmental Protection**

- 4.1 No objection, subject to conditions to secure submission and approval of a noise assessment and mitigation scheme, contamination land assessment and remediation scheme, construction method statement including details of noise and dust controls, vermin control measures for the bin store, adherence to standard construction working hours and to ensure no waste is burned on site.

##### **RBC Transport**

- 4.2 No objection, subject to conditions to secure submission and approval of a construction method statement and cycle store details, provision of the proposed bin store and a s106 obligation to secure private bin refuse collection arrangements for the site.

##### **RBC Natural Environment Trees**

- 4.3 No objection, subject to conditions to secure submission and approval of a hard and soft landscaping scheme.

##### **RBC Ecological Consultant**

- 4.4 No objection, subject to conditions to secure submission of a scheme for the installation of four swift boxes within the proposed development.

#### **RBC Conservation and Urban Design**

- 4.5 No objections following submission of amended plans incorporating the original brick southern elevation wall and brick boundary wall within the development and addition of front roof pitch to the proposed building. Conditions recommended to secure exact details of proposed materials and a scheme for retention-and re-use of the brick southern elevation wall.

#### **Berkshire Archaeology**

- 4.6 No objection, the potential for survival or archaeological remains at the site is low.

#### **Public Consultation**

- 4.7 Melrose House East and West 71-73 London Rd, no.s 30 to 36 Princes Street (evens), no.s 105 to 111 Watlington Street (odds) and Princes House 73A London Road were notified of the application and submission of amended plans by letter. A site notice was also displayed at the application site.

- 4.8 Three letters of objection have been received raising the following matters:

- Design is out of keeping with the street and conservation area
- Access to the flats via the adjacent car park will negatively impact on the NHS/healthcare building at no.s 71-73 London Road to whom the car parking relates
- Overlooking/loss of privacy from the first and second floor side facing windows to the southern flank elevation of the building
- The position of the first and second floor windows would also prejudice future development of the car park at no.s 71-73 London Road and their position would not meet building regulations requirements
- Dispute that the applicant has legal rights (right of way) to use the existing access gate to the south elevation as the main entrance to the flats which requires access over the neighbouring properties land (via car park)

- 4.9 The Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee (CAAC) have also commented on the application and amended plans and object for the following reasons:

- Prefer that the building would continue in its current light industrial use or if there is to be a residential use this should be a conversion only
- Should demolition of the building be approved as many of the existing bricks as possible should be re-used within the new development
- Demolition and replacement of the building would destroy the heritage of the building comprised by its use, footprint configuration, materials and features to the detriment of the conservation area
- The boxy form of the rear unbalances the building
- The proposal is an overdevelopment of the site
- Concerned about the amenity of future occupiers

## **5. LEGAL AND PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT**

5.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy framework (NPPF) - among them the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'. However, the NPPF does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making.

5.2 Accordingly, the National Planning Policy Framework and the following development plan policies and supplementary planning guidance are relevant:

5.3 Reading Local Plan 2019

CC1: PRESUMPTION IN FAVOUR OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

CC2: SUSTAINABLE DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION

CC3: ADAPTATION TO CLIMATE CHANGE

CC4: DECENTRALISED ENERGY

CC5: WASTE MINIMISATION AND STORAGE

CC6: ACCESSIBILITY AND THE INTENSITY OF DEVELOPMENT

CC7: DESIGN AND THE PUBLIC REALM

CC8: SAFEGUARDING AMENITY

CC9: SECURING INFRASTRUCTURE

EN1: PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

EN3: ENHANCEMENT OF CONSERVATION AREAS

EN4: LOCALLY IMPORTANT HERITAGE ASSETS

EN9: PROVISION OF OPEN SPACE

EN12: BIODIVERSITY AND THE GREEN NETWORK

EN14: TREES, HEDGES AND WOODLAND

EN15: AIR QUALITY

EN16: POLLUTION AND WATER RESOURCES

EM3: LOSS OF EMPLOYMENT LAND

H1: PROVISION OF HOUSING

H2: DENSITY AND MIX

H3: AFFORDABLE HOUSING

H5: STANDARDS FOR NEW HOUSING

H10: PRIVATE AND COMMUNAL OUTDOOR SPACE

TR1: ACHIEVING THE TRANSPORT STRATEGY

TR3: ACCESS, TRAFFIC AND HIGHWAY-RELATED MATTERS

TR4: CYCLE ROUTES AND FACILITIES

TR5: CAR AND CYCLE PARKING AND ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING

5.4 Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD's)

Supplementary Planning Document: Affordable Housing (2013)

Supplementary Planning Document: S106 Planning Obligations (2014)

Supplementary Planning Document: Parking Standards and Design (2011)

Supplementary Planning Document: Sustainable Design and Construction (2019)

5.5 Other

Eldon Square Conservation Area Appraisal (2007)

6. **APPRAISAL**



The main issues raised by this planning application are as follows:

- Principle
- Design, Character and Heritage
- Unit Mix and Affordable Housing
- Amenity of Surrounding Occupiers
- Standard of Residential Accommodation
- Sustainability
- Transport
- Natural Environment

#### Principle

- 6.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (2019) encourages the effective use of land by reusing land that has been previously developed (brownfield land) and seeks that all housing applications should be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development. The accessibility of the site, located just outside the Reading Central Area as defined by the Reading Local Plan (2019), is considered acceptable for the proposed development in accordance with Policy CC6 (Accessibility and Intensity of Development) whilst the provision of new housing would align with the broad objectives of Policy H1 (Provision of Housing) in assisting in meeting the annual housing targets.
- 6.2 The loss of the existing light industrial use of the building must also be considered. The site is not located within a Core Employment Area and Policy EM3 (Loss of Employment Land) states that in such locations loss of employment land must be considered against a number of criteria including the accessibility of the site, viable continued use or redevelopment for employment uses, availability of similar accommodation elsewhere and is an employment use appropriate for the location.
- 6.3 The building has been vacant for a significant length of time. The Applicant advises that the building has been on the rental market for light industrial uses for over three years without being let. The building is not in an optimum location of access to the strategic road network with existing out of town centre employment sites within the Borough being more conveniently located. The site is also located within a predominantly residential area where a light industrial use could result in harm to the amenity of surrounding occupiers and potentially the character of the conservation area. Officers do not object to the proposed loss of employment land in this location which is considered to be acceptable in the context of Policy EM3.
- 6.4 The broad principle of the proposal for residential development is therefore considered to be acceptable and in accordance with CC6, H1 and EM3. The details of the proposed development are now considered within the rest of this report.

#### Design, Character and Heritage Matters

- 6.5 Policy CC7 aims to preserve or enhance the character of the area in which a development is proposed in terms of layout, landscape, density, scale, height, massing, architectural detail and materials. Policy EN1 (Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment) states that heritage assets, including their settings will be protected and where possible enhanced. The policy goes on to state that proposals should seek to avoid harm to heritage assets in the first instance but that any harm identified would require clear

and convincing justification, usually in the form of public benefits. Policy EN3 (Enhancement of Conservation Areas) seeks that development proposals preserve and enhance the special character of conservation areas.

- 6.6 Policy EN4 (Locally Important Heritage Assets) sets out that development proposals that affect locally important heritage assets will demonstrate that the development conserves architectural or historical significance of the asset, including the appearance, character and setting. The policy goes on to state that planning permission may be granted in cases where a proposal could result in harm to or loss of a locally important heritage asset only where it can be demonstrated that the benefits of the development significantly outweigh the asset's significance. Where it is accepted by the LPA that retention is not important recording of the heritage asset should be undertaken and submitted alongside development proposals. Replacement buildings should draw upon heritage elements of the previous design, incorporating historic qualities that made the previous building significant, which may include appearance, scale and architectural quality.
- 6.7 A detailed heritage statement has been submitted with the application which considers both the partial loss of building of townscape merit, the impact of the proposals of the significance of the Eldon Square Conservation Area and also the impact of the proposals on the setting of the adjacent Grade II listed building at no.s 71-73 London Road.
- 6.8 It should be noted that when the application was initially submitted the proposals sought to completely demolish and replace the existing building, including the southern boundary brick wall with the adjacent car park serving no.s 71-73 London Road. Following discussions with Officers, including the Council's Conservation and Urban Design Officer (CUDO), amended plans have been submitted which now seek to retain the entirety of the southern boundary brick wall as well as the partial retention of the southern flank elevation brick wall of the building.

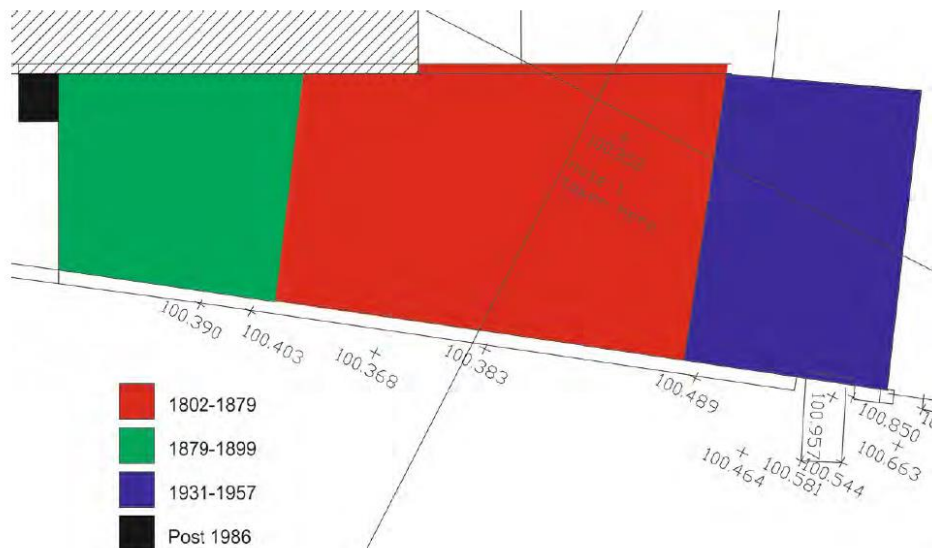


*Visuals of development as initially proposed*



Visuals of development as shown on the submitted amended plans

- 6.9 Other changes secured include introduction of a pitch roof to the front of the building to reflect the pitch of the rest of the terrace, removal of exposed front balconies and all rear balconies and reduction in size of all fenestration generally.
- 6.10 Considering first the loss/partial loss of the building of townscape merit the submitted heritage assessment shows that the building has been subject to a variety of alterations and additions over its history which is evident in the form of the building today with the presence of a number of utilitarian additions and replacement features including timber cladding section to the front upper floor of the building, rear extension which projects above the main roof form, modern front WC extension and also the presence of white PVC windows. The remaining original part of the building is considered to be the central red brick part of the building highlight in red on the plan below. It is this part of the building that is considered to contribute to the building's historic significance.



Plan showing estimated dates of the built form of the building as existing



*Front elevation of existing building*

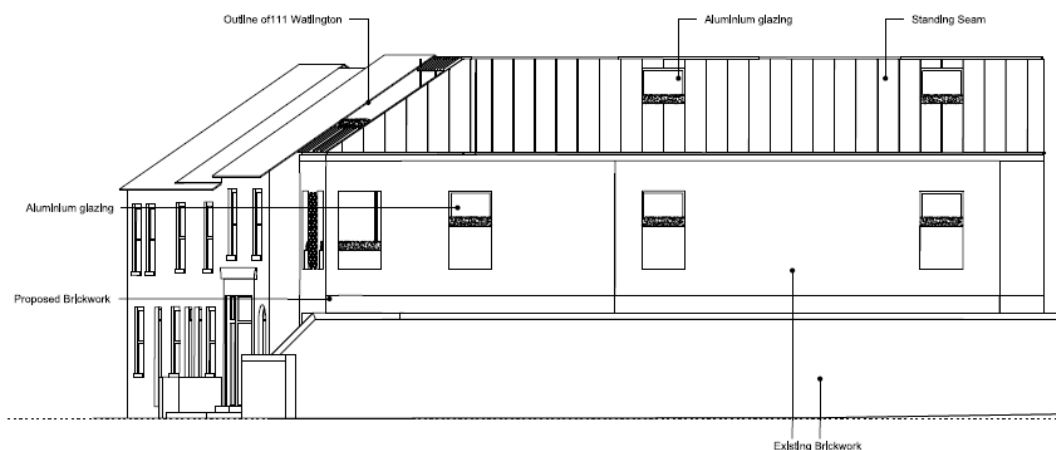


*Southern flank elevation of existing building*

- 6.11 Whilst acknowledging that the definition of a building of townscape merit is one that is considered to contribute positively to the character of the conservation area, Officers view is that the current building, as a result of the presence of a number of more modern additions/alterations, has a limited contribution to character of the conservation area. Certain features of the building such as the white PVC windows, modern WC extension and area of timber cladding which are prominent in views of the primary front elevation of the building from Watlington Street are, due to their utilitarian appearance, considered to be negative contributors to the conservation area and to detract from the building's significance. The buildings long term vacancy is also considered to detract from its significance and general contribution to the surrounding area.
- 6.12 Notwithstanding the above, key to any justification for loss/partial loss of the existing building is its replacement with a building of appropriate scale, form and high-quality design.
- 6.13 As referred to above the amended plans which have been submitted now seek to incorporate the original red brick southern flank elevation wall of the building within the development. The applicant has indicated that due to the age of this part of the building it may have to be rebuilt in order to be suitable for a modern residential development but that if this is required this would be carried out using the existing brickwork where appropriate. Details of the re-use of the existing brickwork to this elevation would be secured by way of suitably worded condition. Incorporation of this part of the existing building

within the development is welcomed given that this is the part of the building most visible from the surrounding area and which is considered to contribute most to its significance. The amended proposals also include retention of the prominent red brick boundary wall which runs along the boundary with the southern boundary of the site with the adjacent car park. Officers consider that retention of this feature is also positive and provides an appropriate and characterful setting to the building when viewed from the junction of Watlington Street and London Road.

- 6.14 Together with incorporation of the original features of the building referred to above Officers consider that the proposed replacement building as a whole is of appropriate scale and is of suitable high-quality design. In terms of scale and massing the roof height of the building would reflect that of the adjoined mid terrace building at no.111 Watlington Street whilst the pitch to the front roof would be reflective of the roof pitches of the rest of this part of the terrace. The footprint of the proposed building would retain the set back of the front elevation from the adjoined building creating a degree of subservience to the rest of the terrace. Whilst to the rear the footprint of the building would be reduced and pulled away from its current very close proximity to the rear of no. 36 Prince's Street. There is no objection to formation of a basement level of accommodation with basements being found to properties elsewhere within Watlington Street.



*Proposed southern elevation view along Watlington Street*

- 6.15 The proposed materials (red brick and slate) with retention/re-use of the existing red brick to much of the southern elevation and slates to the second floor and roof of the building are considered to be appropriate and high quality. Two enclosed balconies are proposed at first and second floor level to the front elevation of the building. At first floor level this terrace area would be set behind a patterned brick façade with two openings reflecting the proportions of first floor windows to the rest of the terrace and second floor (roof level) this be in the form of a recessed balcony within the front roof pitch. Whilst balconies are a common feature of the wider area, they are not common to Watlington Street. However, the enclosed nature of the two balcony areas proposed is such that they are considered to appear suitably discreet and to integrate satisfactorily with the street-scene. Small intrusions into the southern flank elevation would be required to provide small high-level windows to the flats. Given the minimal nature of intrusion required the Conservation and Urban Design Officer is satisfied that this would still facilitate retention/re-use of the majority of the existing red brick flank elevation of the existing building.



- 6.16 Planning permission was granted in 2007 (ref. 07-01073-FUL) for conversion and minor alteration of the existing building for residential use but this permission was never implemented. The applicant advises that this scheme was not brought forward at the time due to the structure of the existing building and challenges of meeting building regulation requirements for residential accommodation which would have required rebuilding of much of the building to be achieved.
- 6.17 In terms of landscaping the existing site does not contain any trees or vegetation. Given the constrained nature of the site provision of landscaping within the development is challenging. The proposals include small areas of planting to the front and within the rear courtyard whilst planters are proposed to the front balconies at first and second floor level as well as window boxes to all windows within the development. Provision of a green wall was considered by the Applicant and Officers however, the feasible location for this would have been the southern elevation where Officers have sought to retain the existing original brickwork of the building and as such provision of a green wall which would obscure the retained/re-used brickwork was not considered appropriate. In overall terms the Natural Environment Officer is satisfied that the proposals would represent an overall enhancement and net gain in terms of greening on the site and within the conservation area. Details of landscaping and proposed planting would be secured by way of condition.
- 6.18 In terms of impact on the surrounding Eldon Square Conservation Area views of the building are primarily obtained from the south from the adjacent car park serving no.s 71-73 London Road, the junction of Watlington Street and London Road and views from the rear across the car park from Prince's Street. The Eldon Square Conservation Area Appraisal outlines that features which contribute to the special character of this part of the conservation area include two grade II listed churches, Grade II star listed Watlington House, variety of terraced houses, typical 19<sup>th</sup> century street patterns, historic stone kerbs and gully's and roofscapes of brick chimneys and pots. Features identified as negative contributors to this part of the conservation area include the modern petrol station (opposite the application site), car parking to front of properties, loss of original windows, doors, slate roofs and boundary walls, wheelie bins on the pavements and boarded up shops.
- 6.19 The site has been vacant for a long time and a proposal to bring the site back into a viable use is considered of benefit to the conservation area. Whilst the design of the building is more contemporary than the existing building, Officer's consider that this is an overall enhancement compared to the appearance of the existing building and that the proposals strike the appropriate balance between retaining some original elements of the original building (including boundary wall) and providing a new building of suitable design quality that would contribute positively to the character of the surrounding area and conservation area.
- 6.20 The southern boundary of the application site is shared with the car park of no.s 71-73 London Road which is a four storey Georgian white stucco grade II listed building currently in use as an NHS healthcare building/office. The scale, massing and footprint of the proposed development are generally reflective of the existing building and rest of the terrace and together with the part retention of the existing south flank elevation wall, retention of the southern brick boundary wall and use of appropriate new materials it is not considered that the proposals would adversely impact on the adjacent listed building. The siting of the proposals would not change views of the listed building from the



surrounding area and the setting of the listed building is considered to be preserved.

- 6.21 Overall it is considered that the proposals are of suitable design quality and would contribute positively to the character of the surrounding area, setting of adjacent listed building and conservation area and preserve their settings. It is considered that the proposals would represent an enhancement to the area when compared to the existing building and as such the partial loss of the existing building of townscape merit is, in this instance, considered to have been justified.
- 6.22 The proposals are considered to accord with policies CC7, EN1, EN3 and EN4.

#### Unit Mix and Affordable Housing

- 6.23 Policy H2 (Density and Mix) states that development proposals should provide an appropriate mix of units based on the character and mix of units found in the surrounding area. Watlington Street contains a variety of residential properties including single dwellings and flats. The proposed mix of 2 x two-bedroom units and 4 x one-bedroom units is considered to be appropriate for the site's location just outside the defined Reading Central Area.
- 6.24 Policy H3 (Affordable Housing) states that development proposals of between five and nine dwellings should provide an affordable housing contribution to enable the equivalent of 20% of the housing to be provided as affordable housing elsewhere within the Borough. In accordance with the adopted Affordable Housing SPD this equates to a contribution equivalent to 10% of the Gross Development Value of the scheme. The Applicant has agreed to the principle of this contribution to be secured by way of a section 106 legal agreement. Officers await submission of valuations of the development for review and details of the affordable housing contribution to be secured will be provided by way of an update report.

#### Amenity of Surrounding Occupiers

- 6.25 Policy CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity) seeks to protect the amenity of existing surrounding occupiers. Policy EN15 (Air Quality) and Policy EN16 (Pollution and Water Resources) seeks to protect surrounding occupiers from the impact of pollution.
- 6.26 The rear of the existing building is located very close (2m) from the rear of no. 36 Prince's Street, a residential dwelling. Both the existing building and no. 36 have first floor rear windows which face each other at this close proximity. The existing building has a full width bank of windows whilst no. 36 incorporates two first floor rear facing windows. The proposed development would reduce the footprint of the development to the rear and pull the building away from the rear of no. 36, increasing the separation to 6m and significantly improving the rear outlook, privacy and amenities of the neighbouring dwelling.
- 6.27 Whilst the proposed development would incorporate single rear facing windows at first and second floor level the windows have been positioned close to the southern elevation side of the rear elevation which is opposite a rear facing obscurely glazed window of no. 36 and would also incorporate hit and miss brick panelling to the part of the window to provide further screening. The position of the proposed first and second floor windows is such that the

relationship with the second window to the rear of no.36 which is clear glazed would be at an oblique angle. Whilst the relationship of the development with the rear windows of no.36 is very close Officers are satisfied that the position of the proposed windows together with the proposed hit and miss screening would be such that incidences of overlooking would be suitably mitigated and that in overall terms the proposals would result in an improvement to the residential amenity of no. 36.

- 6.28 The existing building also contains a bank of five side facing windows on the north flank elevation of the building facing along the rear gardens of the adjoined terrace of buildings. The closest boundary of the adjoined property, no. 111 Watlington Street is located 3.5m from the north flank elevation. The proposals seek to replace these windows with single side facing bedroom windows , at first floor and second. Again, whilst this is a close relationship the single first and second floor level windows would look over the rear of the adjacent gardens and in overall terms is considered to result in an improvement above the existing situation in terms of overlooking.
- 6.29 The south flank elevation of the building is located directly on the boundary with the car park servicing the NHS building at no. 71-73 London Road and does not incorporate side facing windows other than large roof lights to the side facing roof slope. The proposed development would retain the position of the south flank elevation on the boundary. No windows are proposed at ground floor level to this elevation and whilst windows are proposed at first and second floor level these are high level windows only such that the proposals are not considered to result in an overlooking or loss of privacy to the adjacent site which has a car parking at its closet point with the building at no. 71-73 located 13.5m away from the boundary. The occupier of the adjacent NHS building has objected due to loss of privacy for patients but given the separation and that high-level windows only are proposed to the facing elevation of the development officers are satisfied that no undue overlooking or loss of privacy would occur.
- 6.30 First and second floor rear facing staircase windows are also proposed which would be secured as obscurely glazed by way of a suitably worded condition.
- 6.31 The proposed development has a reduced foot print compared to the existing building and the height of the building would also be reflective of the existing building. Whilst the proposed building has a bulkier roof form than the existing building this is not considered to appear out of scale with surrounding building and the proposals would result in any undue significant overbearing impacts to surrounding properties above that of the existing structure.
- 6.32 In terms of any potential noise and disturbance impacts it is considered that the proposed development of six flats would very likely result in an improved situation for surrounding occupiers as opposed to the potential re-use of the site for the current lawful light industrial use.
- 6.33 In terms of the amenity of surrounding occupiers the proposals are considered to accord with Policies CC8, EN15 and EN16.

#### Standard of Accommodation for Future Occupiers

- 6.34 Policy CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity) seeks to protect the amenity of future occupiers. Policy EN15 (Air Quality) and Policy EN16 (Pollution and Water Resources) seeks to protect future occupiers from the impacts of pollution.

Policy H5 (Standards for New Housing) sets out the standard to which all new build housing should be built. In particular new housing outside of the defined Reading Central Area should adhere to national prescribed space standards. Policy H10 (Private and Communal Outdoor Space) seeks that residential developments are provided with adequate private or communal outdoor amenity space.

- 6.35 Five of the six proposed flats would exceed the nationally prescribed space standards. One of the first-floor flats would measure 35m<sup>2</sup> which is 2m<sup>2</sup> below the standard. Officers view is that this unit is very marginally below the standard and that the proposed unit is still of a size that would provide for an adequate standard of accommodation for future occupiers. A number of the other units would significantly exceed the space standards and in overall terms the unit sizes within the development are considered to be acceptable. The site is also located just outside the Reading Central Area where Policy H5 sets out that the space standards are not applicable. All the proposed flats are considered to be served by suitable daylighting and outlook. The duplex units across ground and basement floor would be served by large front and rear lightwells providing a good degree of daylighting to the basement floor of the development.
- 6.36 Policy H10 requires that residential development is served by the adequate private or communal amenity space that is reflective of the provision and character of such spaces in the surrounding area. Two of the units within the development would be served by good sized enclosed private terrace areas. The other units within the development would not have access to private amenity space. A small communal courtyard area is also proposed to the rear of the site, but this primarily serves as a cycle and bin store area and access point to the flats on the upper floors of the development. Policy H10 acknowledges that flats located close to the town centre may not be able to provide dedicated amenity space and given the site's central location close to public recreation and leisure facilities Officers are satisfied that the development as a whole provide adequate amenity space provision.
- 6.37 The proposed duplex unit to the front of the building would be accessed via a ground floor level door from Watlington Street whilst the other units would be accessed from an existing entrance gate to the building towards the rear of the southern elevation of the building. This entrance gate is accessed from the adjacent site of no. 71-73 London Street via an existing pathway along the northern boundary of the car park serving the adjacent building. There is an existing and established access point to the building and the Applicant advises that they have a lawful right of way to this access.
- 6.38 In terms of noise impacts the development is located close to the busy London Road. Environmental Protection Officers recommend conditions are attached to any planning permission to secure submission and approval of a noise assessment and mitigation scheme prior to commencement of development to ensure an appropriate glazing specification and mechanical ventilation scheme are secured. An air quality assessment has been submitted with the application and Environmental Protection Officers are satisfied that this demonstrates that future occupiers of the development would not be subject to unacceptable air quality. The assessment also considers the impact of the proposed development on local air quality and notes that as a car free development the proposals would not adversely contribute to air quality as a result of increased emissions. A condition is also recommended to secure details of vermin and pest control measures for the proposed rear bin store.

- 6.39 The site has formerly been occupied under an industrial use and therefore Environmental Protection Officer recommend conditions are attached to secure submission and approval of a contaminated land assessment and remediation scheme prior to commencement of development.
- 6.40 Conditions are also recommended to secure a construction method statement including noise and dust control measures and adherence to the Council's standard working hours for construction activities.
- 6.41 The proposals are considered to accord with Policies H5, H10, EN15, EN16 and CC8.

#### Sustainability

- 6.42 Policy CC3 (Adaption to Climate Change) seeks that proposals should incorporate measures which take account of climate change. Policy H5 (Standard for New Housing) seeks that all new housing development achieves a 19% improvement above the dwelling emission rate as described in building regulations and that development is built to achieve the higher water efficiency standard as described in building regulations. Adherence of the development to these standards would be secured by way of conditions. Other sustainability measures incorporated within the development include a net increase in greening and landscaping across the site, use of high quality and energy efficient materials, re-use of existing brick-work and provision of a car free development.
- 6.43 The proposals are considered to accord with Policies CC3 and H5.

#### Transport

- 6.44 Policies TR3 (Access, Traffic and Highway related matters), TR1 (Achieving the Transport Strategy) and TR5 (Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging) seek to address access, traffic, highway and parking relates matters relating to development.
- 6.45 The site is located within walking/cycling distance of the town centre and local services. A frequent service of public transport is available along London Road and Queens Road which provides a good frequency of services.
- 6.46 The development is located at the south end of Watlington Street, which is a residential road with a mix of parking restrictions and limited waiting and parking occurring on both sides of the carriageway. The development is proposed as car free. Given the site location and the extensive on street restrictions present in the area, which includes the operation of the Council's Residents Parking Permit Scheme, a car free development is considered to be acceptable. In accordance with the Council's adopted Parking Standards and Design Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) 2011 the proposed development would generate additional parking but given the existing high levels of on-street parking in the surrounding area, there should be an assumption that any future occupants of the flats will not be issued with resident or visitor parking permits. This will be covered by way of appropriate condition.
- 6.47 In accordance with the SPD the development is required to provide one cycle parking space per flat. A covered cycle store for six cycles is shown to the rear

courtyard area of the site which is considered to be acceptable. A condition is recommended to secure details of the type of cycle stand proposed and secure nature of the store.

- 6.48 A secure bin store is also proposed within the rear courtyard of the site. It is proposed to secure private bin collection for the development by way of section 106 agreement so that refuse collectors enter the site and take the waste directly from the store. This is required to prevent bins for the six flats being left on the pavement to either Watlington Street or Princes Street and causing additional street clutter within the Conservation Area and to prevent residents from having to drag bins across neighbouring land to be collected from the surrounding roads.
- 6.49 Given the location of the site close to the town centre and busy roads a condition is recommended to secure submission and approval of a construction method statement prior to the commencement of any development on site.
- 6.50 The proposals are considered to accord with Policies TR1, TR3 and TR5.

#### Natural Environment

- 6.51 Policy EN12 (Biodiversity and the Green Network) requires development to retain, protect and incorporate features of biodiversity or geological interest found within the application site into their schemes.
- 6.52 A bat survey has been submitted with the application which has been reviewed by the Council's Ecology Adviser who is satisfied that this demonstrates that the building is unlikely to host roosting bats and the proposed development would not result in harm to protected species. A condition is recommended to secure details of four swift brick to be installed within the development such that the proposals would result in a net gain in biodiversity on the site.
- 6.53 The proposals are considered to accord with Policy EN12.

#### Other

##### *Community Infrastructure Levy*

- 6.54 The proposed development has a gross internal area of 384m<sup>2</sup> which equates to a potential levy of sixty thousand one hundred and seventy-six pounds (£60,170). If the Applicant can demonstrate that any part of the building has been in its lawful use for a continuous period of six months within the last three years then the payable levy may be reduced.

#### Equalities Impact

- 6.55 When determining this application, the Council is required to have regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. There is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that the protected groups have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to the planning application. Therefore, in terms of the key equalities protected characteristics it is considered there would be no significant adverse impacts as a result of the development.

## **7. Conclusion**

- 7.1 This proposal has been carefully considered in the context of the Reading Borough Local Plan and the recommendation is to grant full planning permission subject to the conditions and legal agreement heads of terms set out in the recommendation box at the top of this report.

**Drawings and Documents Considered Submitted:**

WSR-GA-1201 Rev E - Proposed First Floor Plan  
WSR-GA-1202 Rev E - Proposed Second Floor Plan  
WSR-GA-4001 Rev B - Proposed Elevations  
Received by the Local Planning Authority on 20<sup>th</sup> August 2021

WSR-GA-4000 Rev E - Proposed Elevations  
Received by the Local Planning Authority on 28<sup>th</sup> July 2021

WSR-GA-1021 Rev B - Proposed Site Plan  
Received by the Local Planning Authority on 26<sup>th</sup> May 2021

WSR-GA-1010 Rev C - Proposed Location Plan  
Received by the Location Planning Authority on 25<sup>th</sup> May 2021

WSR-GA-1199 Rev E - Proposed Basement Floor Plan  
WSR-GA-1200 Rev E - Proposed Ground Floor Plan  
WSR-GA-1202 Rev D - Proposed Roof Plan  
WSR-GA-4002 Rev B - Proposed Section  
Received by the Local Planning Authority on 24<sup>th</sup> May 2021

The Historic Environment Consultancy Heritage Statement ref. 2020/1558  
Version 1 (dated 12<sup>th</sup> November 2020)  
Received by the Local Planning Authority on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2020

**Case Officer: Matt Burns**

Plans and Drawings:



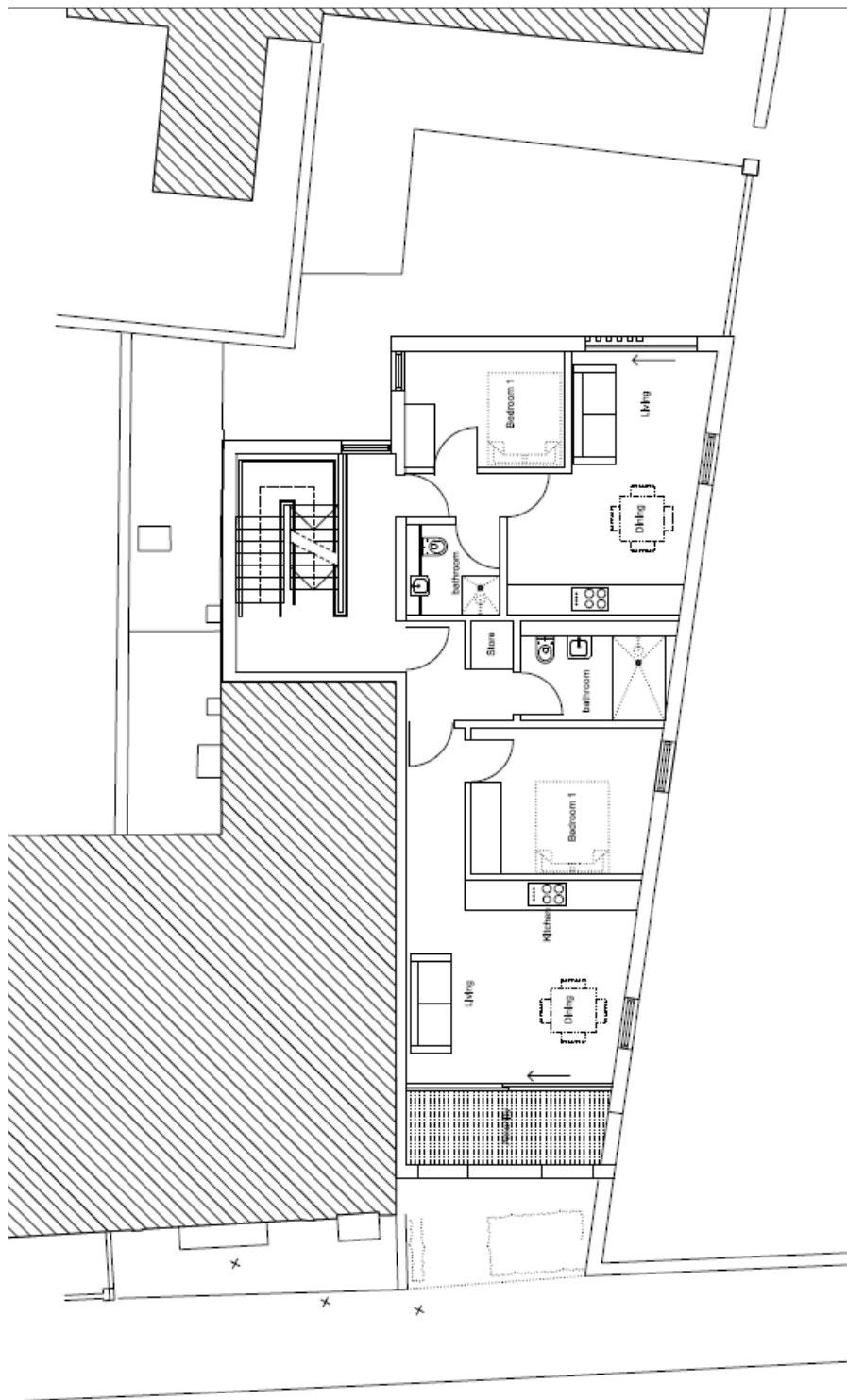
PRINCE'S STREET



WATLINGTON STREET

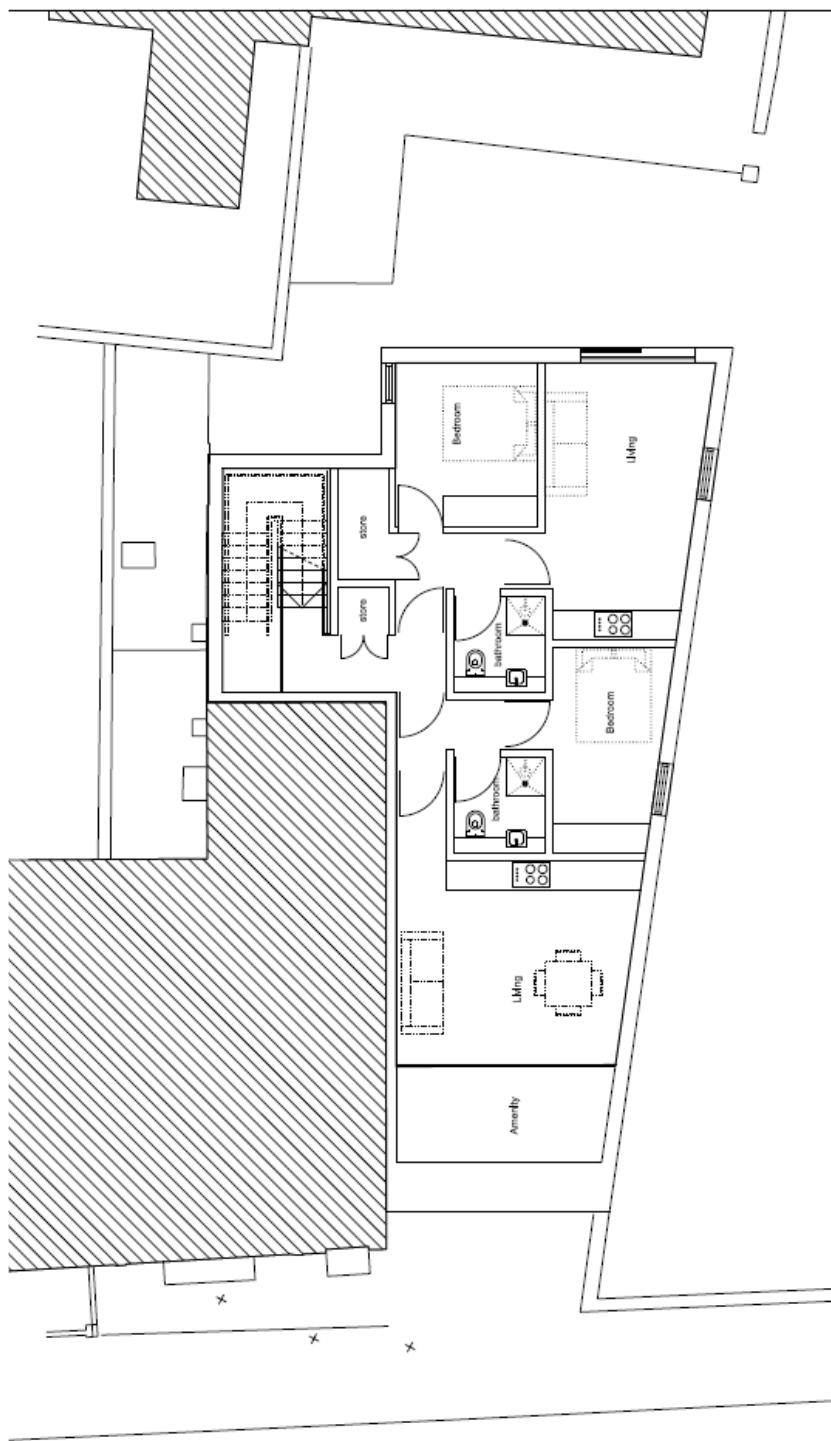
Proposed Site Plan





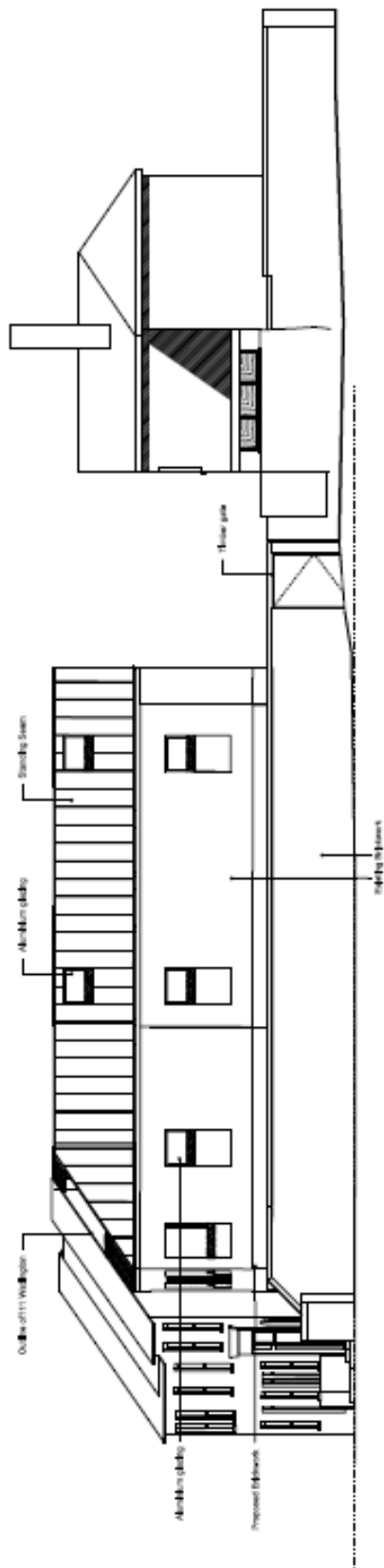
WATLINGTON STREET

Proposed First Floor Plan

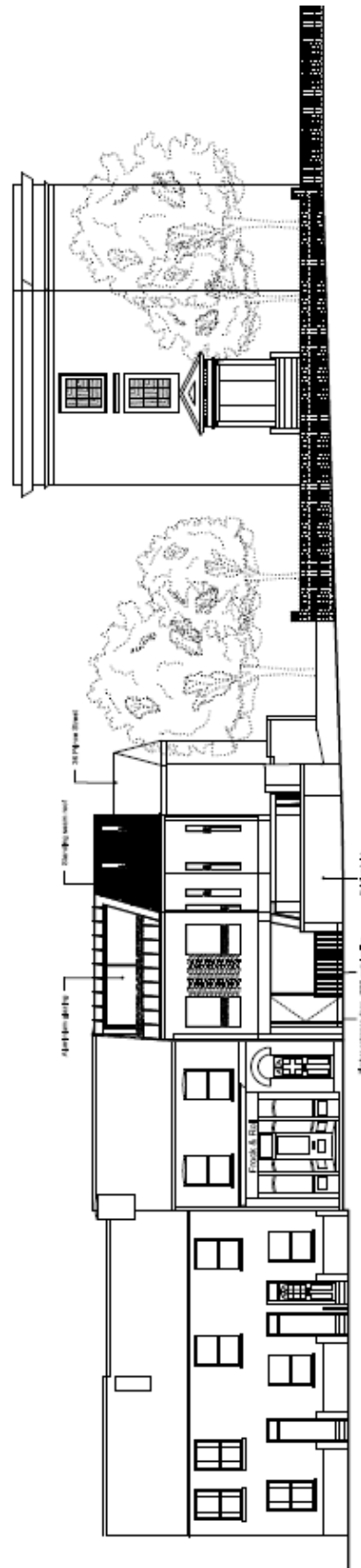


WATLINGTON STREET

Proposed Second Floor Plan



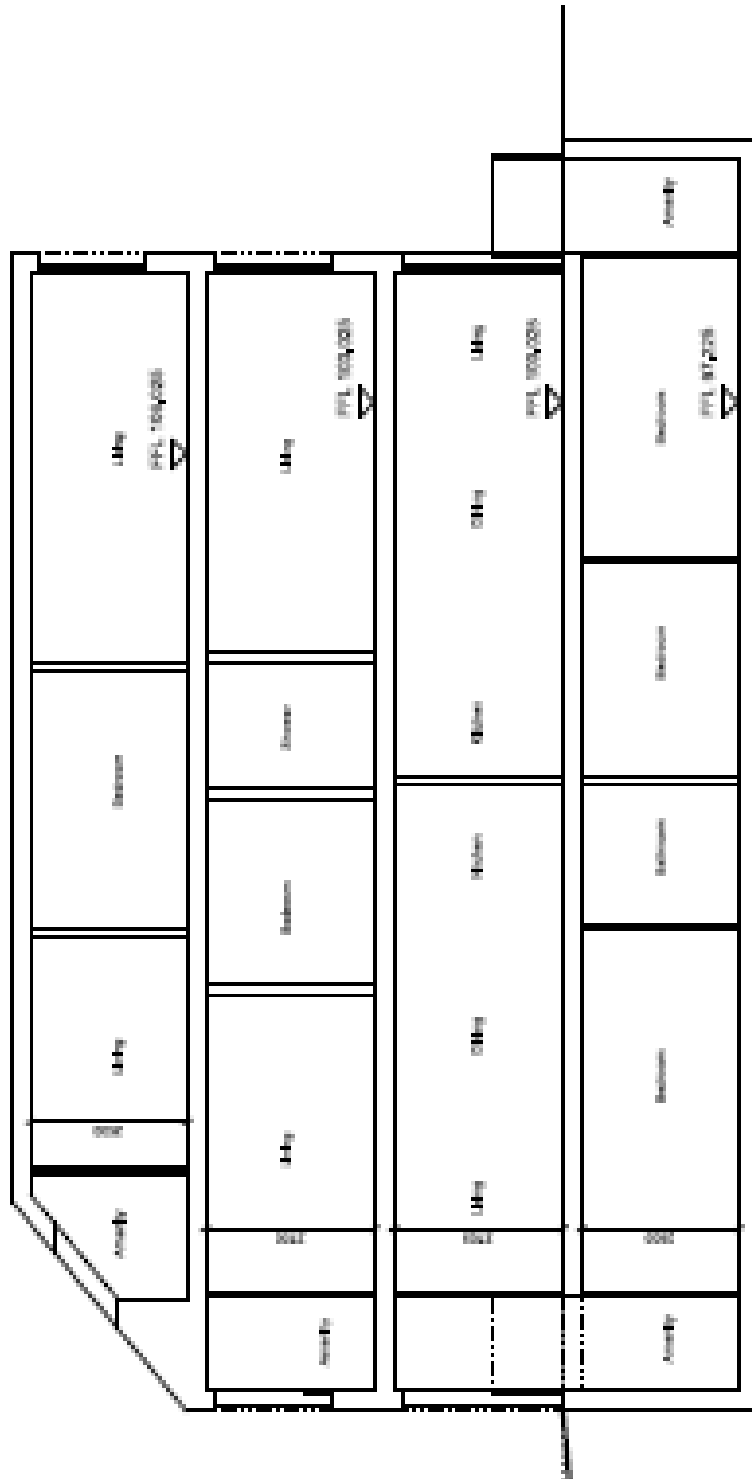
### Proposed South Elevation



### Proposed West (Front) Elevation







Proposed Section



Proposed Visual - View from Watlington Street (Front)



Proposed Visual - View from Rear (Princes Street)